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ABSTRACT

This is the fifth in a series of six monographs developed to help local educators use and report Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test results. An organized plan facilitates the important task of reporting test results to the school board quickly and accurately. This monograph gives one approach that enables the staff to take the offensive and initiate the reporting process before MEAP results are even returned to the district. This will reduce anxiety and provide a base for developing the districts' comprehensive reporting plan. Three different types of reports to the school board are recommended: (1) a background report on the purposes of MEAP and how the results can be used; (2) a report on actual test results, uses of results in the district, and implications of results (including other measures of achievement); and (3) follow-up reports that present specific ways test results are being used to correct problem areas. While these are not the only usable report techniques, they are effective in focusing the school board's attention on the instructional uses of MEAP, avoiding misleading comparisons with other schools or districts, and assuring the use of MEAP results to help improve student achievement. Appendixes contain resource materials. (BS)

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STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION!

USING AND REPORTING TEST RESULTS

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MONOGRAPH #5

REPORTING TEST RESULTS TO THE SCHOOL BOARD

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MONOGRAPH #5

REPORTING TEST RESULTS TO THE SCHOOL BOARD

Written By:
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USING AND REPORTING TEST RESULTS IS A SERIES OF SIX MONOGRAPHS, DEVELOPED AND PRODUCED BY MICHIGAN EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM STAFF TO HELP LOCAL EDUCATORS USE AND REPORT TEST RESULTS.

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INTRODUCTION

Educators have to report to their local school boards on a variety of topics throughout the school year. One of the topics they address is student performance; most often as it is reflected in test scores. Although test results can be reported in isolation, staff of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) have found the most successful local reporting efforts to be those which included information on both how the students did (i.e., the scores) as well as how staff plan to use the data to improve instruction and curriculum. The connection between reporting results and planning for use is too often overlooked when the primary focus is on the scores themselves and their meaning. However, understanding of the results is enhanced when the scores are related to the activities that will occur because of them or which have already occurred to help produce them. A description of how staff at the building and district levels plan to analyze and use the results provides a broader context for reporting the data to the school board.

This monograph, the fifth in a series of six, addresses the issue of reporting the MEAP test results to local school boards of education. The other monographs present ideas about using MEAP test results for curriculum and instruction review and revision and reporting results to the public. The ideas presented here are tied to the principle that reporting MEAP test scores and planning for their use are two aspects of a single process; not separate, unrelated activities. The approach to reporting follows from this and is discussed in terms of three types of reports: first, a background report highlighting the purposes of MEAP and outlining how the results will

be used; second, the report of the actual results themselves; and third, at least one follow-up report describing the specific ways the results are being used by teachers, curriculum specialists or district personnel.

PURPOSE

Local boards of education oversee the operation of our public schools. They make policy decisions and allocate funds. Elected to their positions, school board members are expected to represent the interests of the community and part of their role is seen as balancing the "narrower" interests of school and district staffs.

In many instances, school board members are not educators and consequently require a great deal of information about a variety of topics in order to make informed policy decisions. Although this may make them appear nosey, demanding, and unreasonable at times, they really aren't. They usually are just looking for the information they need to do what they see as "their job". In most cases, school board members are not trying to harass or "get" central administrators or school staffs. It is simply that they feel they have a right, as well as an obligation, to know about any and all aspects of the performance or operation of <u>their</u> schools so that they can better do their job.

School boards expect school administrators to provide them with information in a timely manner and in a format they can easily understand. They have many issues to consider and a lot of information to absorb in relatively short periods of time. Considering how the world looks to board members from their side of the table can make it a little easier to understand why they make the demands they do, ask the questions they do, and in general, treat educators the way they do.

The natural tension that exists between local educators and their school board often makes the task of reporting an onerous one. Reporting the MEAP test results is made even worse by the surrounding pressure from media representatives and parents. Having a preconceived, systematic plan of "attack" can help to make the reporting of MEAP scores a routine activity and removes a lot of the accompanying anxiety. This monograph gives one approach to reporting MEAP scores to local school boards that enables the staff to take the offensive and initiate the reporting process before the MEAP results are even returned to the district. The ideas given here provide a solid base for developing the district's comprehensive reporting plan to address the informational needs of all audiences.

PLANNING A REPORTING CAMPAIGN

An organized plan for reporting MEAP test results and MEAP-related information to your local school board and also to district staff and administrators can help to manage staff time more efficiently and minimize surprises. Appendix D contains an example of a chart to help organize a reporting program. Using this approach, important school events and activities are identified, in advance where possible. Then the potential audiences and possible reporting activities can be specified for each event. Responsibilities for preparing and giving the reports can be assigned along with appropriate timelines.

Three different types of reports are recommended as the basis for any reporting campaign. The first report that should be made to the school board is the background report. This is done before the MEAP test results are returned to the schools and basically prepares board members for that event. This report contains an explanation of the purpose of

the Michigan Educational Assessment Program testing, the facts about what is tested and how, and descriptions of how the results will be analyzed, used, and reported.

The second report that is made to the local board of education is the report of the MEAP test results. This report contains the actual district level scores, an interpretation of these scores (including how they compare with scores from the year before and possible reasons for change), information on related achievement measures, and a description of how these results will be reviewed and used at the building and district levels.

The third report is a follow-up on the information provided in the first two. It features a description of the progress being made in using the MEAP scores to improve instruction and the curriculum. This type of report can be made throughout the school year as warranted.

The remaining sections of this monograph will give a more detailed description of the preparation of each of these three reports.

THE BACKGROUND REPORT

The background report provides the opportunity to discuss testing without presenting the scores to distract board members. The purpose of the testing program can be emphasized independently of the natural concerns about whether scores have improved or declined. This is also an opportunity to discuss what will be done with the results before they are received and while there is still time to modify the plan as needed.

There are several things to do in preparing the background report. First, include the basic facts about assessment so such things as number of objectives, items, and so forth are not overly confusing. A single sheet summarizing all the basic facts about MEAP may prove useful (an

example is shown in Appendix A). Second, emphasize the purpose of the MEAP testing. A slide-tape presentation has been put together to help do this. Although it focuses on the reporting of MEAP results to the news media, the presentation is particularly good for lay audiences who need a "non-jargon" explanation of the Program. There are three copies of this slide-tape available from the Assessment Program and these will be loaned upon request. Contact an Assessment staff member at (517) 373-8393 for further information. A good, simple explanation of the Assessment Program can also be found in The Pamphlet for Parents. One copy of this Pamphlet is returned to the district for each student tested.

Show board members a few of the test items. Either copy some sample test items from the MEAP Handbook or put together a short test with items drawn from each grade level to show how the items become more complex from fourth grade to seventh grade to tenth grade. Either of these approaches will give board members a flavor of the test at each grade level.

Third, because some boards of education may not have experience in looking at outcomes of schools or in distinguishing outcomes from inputs, it may be useful to review the materials shown in Appendix B before discussing an outcome measure such as MEAP. The exercise in Appendix B helps differentiate between inputs and outcomes. This exercise could be used as a springboard for a discussion of how input and outcomes may or may not be related, a topic in which boards of education are often interested.

Fourth, be prepared to discuss what will be done with the results. Since it is primarily the responsibility of building principals and classroom teachers to use the results, involve them in the preparation and presentation of this section of the report. Ask them to discuss how the results have

been and will be used in their building and classrooms. This presentation should focus on: a) the use of MEAP results with the students (and parents of students) tested; and b) the use of the results to review and modify the instruction in the areas tested. This will focus the attention of the school board on the instructional use of the results.

Finally, the background report should conclude with a discussion of the district plan to report the results to the board, to parents, and to the public. Tell board members when they can expect the district level and state level result and when the media will receive a report of the results. Also refer to the district plan to encourage buildings to use the results; to show how principals and teachers will be encouraged to use the results.

In summary, then, the background report for the school board should contain these parts:

- Introduction
- Factual Information about MEAP
- Description of Purpose of MEAP
- School Building Presentations about Using Results
- Reporting and Use Plan for District

THE REPORT OF THE DISTRICT MEAP RESULTS

The second of the three reports which each district should make to their school board is the report of the actual MEAP results. This report is crucial in establishing what meaning the MEAP scores have for the district, the building, and individual students. This report of results to the board may also serve as the report of results to the media, thereby increasing the importance of this report.

The report of the results must first provide some basic information about MEAP. This will remind board members of the purpose of the MEAP testing, what is tested, and how. (See Appendix A, MEAP Fact Sheet.)

The next section of the report will show the test results of the district. This section of the report should answer several basic questions:

1. How did we do this year?
2. Has reading and mathematics achievement improved over last year?
3. If so, why?
4. If not, why not?

The most understandable numbers to present are the percentages of students who attained more than three quarters of the objectives (Category 4 of the Proportions Report). These percentages can be shown for this year versus the percentages in the previous year(s). This will show the trend the scores have followed over time.

In addition, it may be important to highlight major changes in the performance of students on objectives. For example, if there have been dramatic increases on certain objectives, the changes in percentages of attainment can be mentioned. This would be important to do if the building teams have been identified and worked on certain key objectives. This emphasis could help reward the extra effort by pointing out how the building team effort appears to have succeeded in improving student achievement.

If the performance of students has decreased significantly on certain objectives, this too is important to acknowledge. While the reasons for the declines may not be readily known, these results may encourage a more detailed review to determine the cause. If so, these plans should be mentioned in the report.

It should be emphasized that school districts ought to downplay comparisons between districts or between school buildings within their district. These comparisons mislead the school board (and the public) by implication. The comparisons imply that districts or schools are being assessed in terms of total inputs or programs. Comparative reports are also interpreted to mean

that districts or schools with higher scores have no problem areas or needs, while districts or schools with lower scores have nothing but problems and needs. Such comparisons too easily get translated into success/failure judgements of the entire school program, based on only a small piece of the total picture.

It is important also in a report to the board about MEAP results to mention other measures of achievement, as well as other school outcomes. These include other test results, number of graduates getting jobs or going on to further their education, number of students qualifying for academic scholarships, and so forth. A list of some other variables which could be included in the report of results is shown in Appendix C.

The next section of the report is the hardest and yet, perhaps, the most important. Once the program has been described, the results presented, and related measures described, it is important to explain the implications of the results. It is important to answer the "so what?" question clearly, concisely, and honestly. It may be hard for district level staff to describe the implications of the results. It is therefore important to involve school-level staff and administrators as well. School level staff should be involved in developing the interpretations of the results and could also be involved in presenting the interpretations to the school board. They have first-hand knowledge of what students have been taught and their capabilities, and can describe the implications of the results in more concrete terms. Teachers and curriculum specialists can help add meaning to the district results by highlighting those test items and objectives on which students' performance met or did not meet established expectations. Finally, some summary statements about achievement level and change(s) over time should be made.

The final section of the report of results should be the district short- and intermediate-range plans to use the results. This section can describe what various buildings plan to do with the results, as well as the district level coordination of these efforts. In addition (whether or not the board report serves as the public report to the news media), it would be a good idea to mention the district's plans to report the results to the media, to parents, and other citizens.

In summary, the report of results should contain these sections:

- Background about MEAP
- District Results
- Interpretation of Results
- Plans to Use Results

FOLLOW-UP REPORTS

Once the results have been reported along with the plans for using the results, it is logical to report back to the board during the school year on the progress in using them. The following topics are suggested for follow-up reports to the board: 1) specific areas of need selected as priority for review, 2) results of the curricular review process, 3) new instruction contemplated as a result of the curriculum review, 4) planned follow-up testing of schools after remediation, and 5) special activities (awards, summer programs, and so forth) planned as a result of testing.

Sharing these follow-up reports with school board members will help highlight concern about student achievement and the uses being made of the test results to help students improve. It also helps the school board focus on the instructional uses of MEAP and de-emphasizes the "comparative" uses of the results.

The follow-up report may be in writing only, or may involve teachers, administrators, parents, or students presenting some aspects of the program. It is often useful to involve others in the reports, since they can talk in realistic terms about the uses of the test results and can factually answer board members' questions.

A follow-up report may contain these sections:

- Review of an Identified Problem Area
- Activities Taken to Correct the Problem
- Results of Efforts to Correct the Problem

SUMMARY

In closing, the importance of reporting results quickly and accurately to the school board should be emphasized. The strategy suggested here consists of planning a reporting campaign around three reports: 1) a background report about purposes of MEAP and how results will be used; 2) a presentation of results, uses of results in the district and implications of results; and 3) follow-up reports that present specific ways results are being used. Appendix D contains a chart to help organize a reporting program. While these are not the only techniques which can be used to present results, they are effective in focusing the attention of the school board members on the instructional uses of MEAP. This will help avoid the use of MEAP results for comparative purposes. More importantly, it will help assure that the MEAP results are used to help improve student achievement.

Remember, test results are only as good as the use to which they are put. An effective plan for reporting MEAP test results to the school board must be accompanied by appropriate efforts to use the results to review and revise curriculum and instruction, as needed.

For the sake of convenience, the suggestions about reporting MEAP results to the school board, as well as other monograph topics, have been

singled out and presented separately. However, this method of subdividing a coordinated team effort was adopted to point out the different responsibilities, goals, approaches, techniques, and procedures needed to implement a good use and reporting procedure. Effective reporting to the school board is only one part of a larger process to use and report MEAP results effectively.

APPENDIX A

MEAP FACT SHEET

1. What is the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP)?

   MEAP is a statewide education testing program.

2. Who is tested?

   All Michigan public school fourth, seventh, and tenth grade students.

3. What is tested?

   Selected basic reading and mathematics skills.

4. Why are students tested?

   To collect information on the status and progress of Michigan basic skills education.

5. When are the fourth, seventh, and tenth grade students tested?

   The fall of each year.

6. What kind of tests are used?

   Objective-referenced.

7. When were the tests first given?

   The 1969-70 school year. However, the objective-referenced tests were first administered in the 1973-74 school year.

8. Where did the objectives come from?

   The objectives are statements of basic or essential skills that Michigan parents, citizens, teachers, building and district administrators, and subject area specialists identified as important for all students to have.

9. How many objectives are tested?

SUBJECT	GRADE 4	GRADE 7	GRADE 10
Reading	29	27	28
Math Core	28	28	28
Math Correlates	20	24	28

10. Have the mathematics and reading objectives ever been revised?

    Yes. The objectives had been reviewed each year, but major revisions were not initiated until 1976. Revised sets of mathematics and communications skills objectives were approved by the State Board of Education in 1980.

11. Have the tests also been revised?

    Yes. New tests, based on the revised objectives, were first administered statewide in the fall of 1980.

12. How many test questions measure an objective?

    Three.

13. How do students show they know the objectives tested?

    To demonstrate mastery of an objective, a student must answer correctly at least two of the three questions that measure the objective.

14. Who receives the results?

    Results are provided for parents, individual students, classrooms, schools, districts, and the state.

APPENDIX B

ON DISTINGUISHING OUTCOMES FROM INPUTS

People usually judge schools on the basis of inputs, particularly the financial resources available to the school district. For example, school districts have frequently been ranked and given a "good" rating for having a relatively high per pupil expenditure, for paying higher than average salaries, and for hiring more employees per pupil relative to other schools. However, there is no guarantee that additional financial resources (inputs) alone will necessarily produce better results in student learning (outcomes). In fact, appeals that have been made on the premise that additional funding will improve educational quality have created a real dilemma for the schools. As financial support increased, public expectations also went up. But instead of evidence of overall progress, the public is confronted with reports of mixed results. Inputs do not measure how well a school is performing its job and parents and citizens need to be encouraged to examine outcome information as well as input data when trying to come to informed decisions about their schools.

Unfortunately, the emphasis on inputs has been so great that it is often difficult for parents and citizens to see that there is another way to look at the schools. Because outcome data has not been as readily available and may be more difficult to interpret than input data, it is tempting to take the course of the least resistance. But it is important for citizens, school board members, and parents to focus on outcomes and to be able to recognize the difference between input and outcome measures. The following "exercises" are provided to illustrate differences in judging a school on the basis of outcome and input measures.

An Exercise in Distinguishing Outcomes from Inputs

Decide whether each statement is a measure of outcome (results of schooling) or a measure of input (that which is invested in the school) and check the appropriate box.

	Outcomes	Inputs
1. The per pupil general fund expenditure for Michville Schools is $1,420.	[ ]	[ ]
2. Maria got one A, two B's, and two C's on her report card.	[ ]	[ ]
3. Michville's new school has many teaching devices to aid in instruction.	[ ]	[ ]
4. Eighty-one percent of the fourth graders showed they could tell time by accurately reading a clock.	[ ]	[ ]
5. The pupils in Mr. Wojtowicz' class showed a gain in spelling proficiency as measured by tests given at the beginning and the end of the year.	[ ]	[ ]
6. The average pupil-teacher ratio of Michville Elementary School is twenty-two pupils for each teacher.	[ ]	[ ]
7. Michville's seventh graders showed mastery of whole number computation and non-mastery of computing with fractions.	[ ]	[ ]
8. Otto's score on a standardized achievement test in mathematics indicates he did better than 55 percent of all other seventh graders who took the test.	[ ]	[ ]

Answers: Items 1, 3, 6 - inputs; items 2, 4, 5, 7, 8 - outcomes

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Adapted from Evaluating the Educational Outcomes of Your Local Schools: A Manual for Parents and Citizens, Citizens Research Council, 1979, pg.8-9

(Available in limited quantities for the MEAP)

APPENDIX C-1

Suggested School Reporting Topics

The Michigan Department of Education believes that there are many aspects of schools or districts that provide the basis for interesting reports. These elements provide material for articles or presentations that could be released or given at various times throughout the school year. Providing year-round coverage of the schools could lessen the emphasis that MEAP test scores are given by the media. The following is a list of some topics that could be used by districts to provide a more balanced picture of their schools. Topics could be used in combination.

A. Inputs

1. District or school facilities for vocational education, career development programs, physical education, human ecology, special education, etc.
2. School support personnel (i.e., nurses, school social workers or psychologists, librarians, teacher-aides, custodians, secretaries, curriculum specialists or consultants, student help, special education consultants, etc.)
3. A district's educational philosophy, concerns, and cognitive and affective goals.
4. Financial Resources
   a. tax base
   b. per pupil expenditures
   c. state aid
   d. federal aid
5. Student/Teacher Ratios
6. Pupil enrollment by grade or by elementary, junior high, and high school.
7. Backgrounds of Teachers
   a. degrees held
   b. colleges or universities attended
   c. previous teaching or work experience
   d. other interesting information (i.e., foreign countries lived in, awards received, community involvement, outside interests, trips taken, etc.)
8. Support Services
   a. counseling and guidance
   b. family services
   c. special education
   d. remedial programs
   e. speech therapy
   f. nursing and library services
   g. gifted programs
   h. summer education and recreation programs
9. Materials and Methods of Instruction
10. Activities Provided for Various Student Interests
11. Parent and Citizen Committees or Councils

B. Activities

1. Special Education Programs (content, types of children served, placement procedures, contact person, etc.)
2. Vocational Education Programs
3. Art Program
4. Music Program
5. Band/Orchestra
6. Girls' Athletics
7. Science Program
8. Language Program (languages offered, resources available, grade levels, pupils enrolled, teaching methods, unusual activities, etc.)
9. Student Community Volunteer Activities
10. Co-ops (number of students involved, type of work, student reaction to, etc.)
11. PTA/PTO Activities
12. Clubs and Extracurricular Activities
13. Field Trips
14. Senior Trips
15. Summer Programs
16. Interesting or Unusual Course Offerings (i.e., Death and Dying, Science projects, Marriage and the Family, Parenting, etc.)
17. Special Holiday Programs/Plays/Open-Houses, etc.
18. Student Fund-Raising Activities

C. Outcomes

1. Number of Students Who Attend College
2. Number of Students Who Get Jobs and Types of Jobs
3. SAT Scores
4. ACT Scores
5. National Mathematics Test Results
6. Athletic Scholarships Received by Students
7. Students Attending Interlochen
8. Science Fair Awards
9. Sports
10. Foreign Study Abroad
11. Academic Scholarships Received by Students
12. Future Plans---Courses to be Offered, Facilities to be Built, etc.

PLANNING A REPORTING CAMPAIGN

School Events and Activities	Accompanying Reporting Activities	Person(s) Responsible	Dates Start	Dates Completion
A. *Prior to Testing* State Briefings Local Briefings Preparation for testing by Assessment Coordinators, teachers, students, and parents	1. Press Release announcing MEAP test schedule and preparation activities 2. District Communications: to teachers to students to parents of students tested to school board on purposes of MEAP			
B. *Tests Administered*	1. Press Release announcing that testing is in progress			
C. *After Testing* Results Distributed: District, school, classroom, student, parent Results Reviewed: identify strengths identify weaknesses curricular implications (district, school, class room) Instructional implications develop plans to address weaknesses	1. District communications about availability of results and review processes 2. Prepare reporting package(s): Identify information of interest (more than just MEAP) Identify information available Decide reporting formats Decide reporting schedule • School Board Report (see Monograph #5) • Report(s) to Media (see Monograph #6) results and conclusions plans for further action actions taken exemplary activities (especially those based on use of MEAP data and subsequent planning) • Parent Report(s) (see Monograph #4) • Annual Report			
D. *Preparation for Next Year's Testing* Identify high priority objectives (district, school)	1. District communications to teachers students, and parents about planning activities and procedures			22

School Events and Activities	Accompanying Reporting Activities	Person(s) Responsible	Dates Start	Dates Completion
Identify performance expectations (district, school) Identify procedures to be used to achieve expectations	2. Press Release about planning in progress (could request community volunteers) 3. Media articles about outcomes of planning activities 4. School board follow-up reports			
E. *Evaluate the Reporting Campaign* Identify strengths and weaknesses	1. Contact audiences to determine reactions to campaign (samples): School Board Media Parents Teachers			
F. *Plan Next Reporting Campaign* Contact media persons (sample?) determine interests determine deadlines Contact parents (sample?) determine interests Contact teachers (sample?) determine interests Contact school board members determine interests				

USING AND REPORTING TEST RESULTS

MONOGRAPH SERIES

Number	Title
1	An Overview
2	Identifying And Addressing Student Needs
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4	Reporting Test Results To Parents
5	Reporting Test Results To The School Board
6	Reporting Test Results To The Public

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